

Mindful of the big stage

Local exponents psyched up to meet high expectations

Reports by LIM TEIK HUAT

KUALA LUMPUR: It's all about mind over matter for the Malaysian exponents when they compete in the World Wushu Championships, which get under way at the Kuala Lumpur Badminton Stadium in Cheras today.

The biennial meet will see a record 1,500 exponents from 80 countries vying for medals in 48 different events in three disciplines – bare hands, weapons and combat – and expectations are high for local exponents to rise to the occasion.

Malaysia had their best ever outing with a four-gold haul in the 2005 edition in Vietnam and the Wushu Federation of Malaysia (WFM) are optimistic they can surpass that feat despite the absence



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of two-time Asian Games gold medallist Chai Fong Ying.

Fong Ying has the enviable record of having delivered three gold medals and one silver from the last four world championships and any team would surely feel the loss of an athlete of her calibre.

Fong Ying, a final-year accountancy student at Universiti Putra Malaysia who retired in May to focus on her studies, had cited injuries as another reason for quitting.

But coach Yoong Thong Foong is

adamant that they have to move on and start looking for other athletes to shine.

"The 10 exponents we have chosen have been training in Foochow for a month under the guidance of China's best coaches.

"If they can control their movements well, winning medals should not be a problem. It is just how well they perform on that day.

"Eight out of the 10 exponents have won medals at the world meet before. With only former world junior champion Yeap Wai Kin and Phoon Eyin making their debut this time, we have an experienced team.

"Even Wai Kin and Eyin should impress in the new form of changquan (northern fist bare hands)," he said.

Of the 10, Lee Yang and Ho Mun

Hua were gold medallists in taijiquan and nanquan (southern fist bare hands) at the Toronto edition in 2009.

Thong Foong is not worried about the absence of Fong Ying, saying he believes the team have a capable replacement in Ng Shin Yii.

"Shin Yii won a silver in the 2009 edition but ... it's whether she can finish her performance without any mistakes," said Thong Foong. "We hope to get a few gold medals as favourites China can only enter for 10 of the 28 taolu events.

"This is to give other countries a chance to fight for the gold medals.

"We stand a chance of winning medals in the men's and women's taijijian, nanquan, daoshu, gunshu and jianshu."